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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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CONVALESCING VETERANS HAVE "GET WELL" OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH FISHING

A program called "fishery management assistance to Veterans Administration hospitals" may be just "part of the job" for the biologists of the Fish and Wildlife Service but it is a light in the dark for many veterans, young and old, who are attempting to recover from the rigors of war.

For "fishery management assistance" made it possible for the Veterans Administration hospital at Downey, Illinois, to develop a half-acre pond into a fishing spot which afforded the patients 3,000 fishing visits during a single season. In another case, assistance was rendered when the Temple, Texas, veterans facility was developing a 12-acre lake which will mean fishing recreation to hundreds of veterans who are convalescing. At the Northampton, Massachusetts, veterans installation, it means a chance for patients to take catchable size trout which the Fish and Wildlife Service plants there annually.

Hospital officials have repeatedly declared that they regard fishing as "extremely beneficial to patients" and in many instances Veterans Administration officials have asked for technical help in stream and pond development. In the period 1951-1955, the Fish and Wildlife Service responded to requests for help at 45 of these installations. In most instances, some improvement of opportunities for recreational fishing was possible.

The amount and kind of technical aid given depends upon conditions. The Fish and Wildlife Service supplies no funds for necessary development. Financing and getting the work done is the responsibility of the Veterans facility and is often accomplished with the help of interested local groups. But the Service does provide, in addition to technical guidance for fishery development, such hatchery fish as may be required for the management programs.

In one instance, a newly built pond was in danger in being written off as a loss because of the matter of water rights. The assistance given there was merely to show the head of the facility how to protect his project in accordance with State irrigation law.

In another instance the assistance began with the inspection of the hospital area and a survey of the existing ponds which were to be flooded in a few years by an irrigation project. Fishery management plans prepared for the ponds were such that no investment would be lost when the ponds were absorbed into the reservoir. Then, taking advantage of the natural features of the ground--and a dike which would be constructed as part of the reservoir--a new lake was designed which would not be affected by the fluctuations of the reservoir water level and which could be easily fished by convalescents.

Not all the assistance to Veterans Administration hospitals is given on hospital property, for many times there are no fishing waters on the hospital grounds. When suitable water is found within a reasonable distance--and when the veterans are assured the right to fish and transportation facilities are available for them--the Fish and Wildlife Service applies the necessary management practices to that water.

In many instances the State fish and game department and the Fish and Wildlife Service cooperate on projects; in others, where survey of the problems shows that the State agency can do the job more easily because of nearby facilities, the task is turned over to the State.

Some of the Veterans Administration hospitals receiving fishery management assistance in 1955 to provide angling for convalescing patients are:

Montrose, New York--A 1.5 acre trout pond restocked with fingerling brook trout and advice given regarding a second pond which was being reclaimed for fishing purposes.

Canandaigua, New York--Bass and bluegill established in two existing ponds on hospital grounds.

Northampton, Massachusetts--A trout stream on the grounds given annual stocking of brook trout.

Downey, Illinois--Voiture Lake, a small pond on the hospital grounds which the Fish and Wildlife Service transformed into good fishing waters some years ago for bass and bluegill. The major management problem has been weed control, which has been handled by mechanical means.

Knoxville, Iowa--For a bass--bluegill angling situation, recommendations made on bank and watershed improvements.

Marion, Illinois--Arrangements made for hospital patients to use the fishing facilities the Service maintains on nearby Crab Orchard Lake.

Fort Meade, South Dakota--Approximately 3,000 catchable-size rainbow trout planted in water on the hospital area in 1955 for successful "put-and-take" fishing.

Dayton, Ohio--Arrangements made with the Ohio Division of Wildlife to stock three small ponds with adult fish on a "put-and-take" basis.

Chillicothe, Ohio--Plans being made by the hospital to construct a new pond in 1956 and management advice relative to project given. Replacement for old pond which the hospital officials maintained with management aid from the Fish and Wildlife Service for several years.

Marion, Indiana--Organized fishing parties from the hospital use the privately owned Sam Good pond adjacent to the hospital grounds as result of Service assistance.

Tomah, Wisconsin--A three-year program of stocking with largemouth bass fingerlings completed in 1955, and brush fish-attractors completed at the patients' fishing site. Lake Tomah is under the jurisdiction of the State of Wisconsin and the Fish and Wildlife Service activities have been in cooperation with the State.

Wood, Wisconsin--Major construction work planned on the hospital grounds has delayed the establishment of a long-range fishery management program on Lake Huston. In the meantime, the State of Wisconsin is periodically stocking the lake with adult bullheads to give immediate fishing for the patients.

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